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11/27/82

(BD002)

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PROG 11-27-84

AMB:FVORTIZ

POL:JJCARRAGHER:JMR

DCM:JABUSHNELL, POL:RBHOWARD, POL:JJDEVINE, RSO:CSTEPHAN

POL-3 AMB DCM, DAO ECON SCI, USIS MILGP RF, RSO CHRON

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

SECSTATE WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PN

USCINCLANT NORFOLK VA

USAFSO HOWARD AFB PN//DOI-LAI//

CINCSO FOR INTAFF AND CINCLANT ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR

TAGS: PGOV, SOCI, AR

SUBJ: WIDESPREA**CONCERN AS VIOLENT CRIME RISES IN

- ARGENTINA

1. - ENTIRE TEXT.)

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(X) Release () Excise () Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: () In Part (X) In Full

() Classify as () Extend as () Downgrade to

Date Declassify on Reason

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2. SUMMARY: VIOLENT CRIME IS INCREASING IN ARGENTINA. SOME OF THE VIOLENCE SEEMS TO ORIGINATE WITH POLITICAL EXTREMISTS, ALTHOUGH THIS DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE AN ORGANIZED, NATIONWIDE EFFORT. THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF INCREASED CRIME AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE IS A PROBLEM FOR THE ALFONSIN ADMINISTRATION. AN**PRIVATE AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS SUGGEST THAT THE ADMINISTRATION IS FULLY AWARE THAT CONSOLIDATING DEMOCRACY WILL REQUIRE DEMONSTRATING THAT AN ELECTED GOVERNMENT CAN MAINTAIN PUBLIC ORDER. END SUMMARY.

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3. VIOLENT CRIME APPEARS TO BE INCREASING IN ARGENTINA. SOME INCIDENTS, SUCH AS THE LARGE-SCALE HOOLIGANISM WHICH IS A STAPLE AT WEEKEND SOCCER MATCHES, ARE CLEARLY THE WORK OF COMMON CRIMINALS. OTHER CRIMES ARE APPARENTLY INTENDED TO MAKE A POLITICAL STATEMENT. FOR EXAMPLE, AN EARLY MORNING BOMB EXPLOSION SLIGHTLY DAMAGED THE STADIUM WHERE - HOURS LATER - THE FINAL GOVERNMENT RALLY FOR THE BEAGLE PLEBISCITE TOOK PLACE. HOWEVER, MANY CRIMES - INCLUDING A FEW SPECTACULAR RECENT INCIDENTS - CANNOT BE SURELY LABELED POLITICAL OR PURELY CRIMINAL AS LONG AS THEY REMAIN UNSOLVED. SOME WELL-PUBLICIZED CASES INCLUDE A THREE-HOUR-LONG TAKEOVER OF A FOUR-STAR HOTEL WHICH REPORTEDLY NETTED THE THIEVES OVER A MILLION DOLLARS, AND A SOPHISTICATED ROBBERY OF A BUENOS AIRES GUNSHOP. TWO LABOR LEADERS WERE SEVERELY WOUNDED IN A SHOOTING ATTACK. THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY IS JITTERY OVER THREATS OF KIDNAPPINGS. PRESS REPORTS CLAIM THAT A MEMBER OF A PROMINENT ARGENTINE TEXTILE FAMILY WAS RANSOMED FOR FOUR MILLION DOLLARS AFTER BEING HELD BRIEFLY BY KIDNAPPERS; IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS, OTHER KIDNAPPINGS ARE MENTIONED. WE HEAR REPORTS OF ARMED GUARDS BEING HIRED TO ACCOMPANY CHILDREN TO AND FROM SCHOOL.

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4

4. LARGE-SCALE HOOLIGANISM IS A STAPLE AT WEEKEND SOCC**
MATCHES.**BOMBINGS SEEM TO BE AN ESPECIALLY FAVORED
TACTIC, USUALLY AIMED AT POLITICAL TARGETS. EXAMPLES
INCLUDE TWO LOCAL UCR HEADQUARTERS AND A TOWN HALL, CARS
BELONGING TO TWO PERONIST MAYORS, AND THE HEADQUARTERS
OF A RETIRED MILITARY OFFICERS ORGANIZATION RECENTLY
FORMED TO SUPPORT DEMOCRACY. MOST OF THE VARIOUS
INCIDENTS OCCUR IN GREATER BUENOS AIRES, BUT SITES IN
CORDOBA AND ROSARIO ARE ALSO HIT BY BOMBS. THE MOST
RECENT CASE OCCURRED IN ROSARIO AND WAS DIRECTED AT
A LOCAL RADIO ADMINISTRATOR.

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Sentence
The most
recent case
occurred
in Rosario
and was
directed at
a local
radio
station
administrator

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5. SOME HERE SPECULATE THAT THE BOMBINGS AND KIDNAPPINGS INDICATE RENEWED ACTIVITY BY POLITICAL EXTREMIST GROUPS (FROM THE RIGHT, LEFT OR BOTH), BUT THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT THIS IS PART OF AN ORCHESTRATED CAMPAIGN. THE CONSPIRATORIAL MINDS ALSO NOTE THE RECENT THEFT OF 106 U.S. PASSPORTS FROM A MORMON CHURCH IN A BUENOS AIRES SUBURB. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE NO ONE WITH A POLITICAL EXTREMIST CONNECTION IS UNDER ARREST FOR ANY OF THE RECENT CRIMES. SEVERAL OF THE ALLEGED PERPETRATORS OF THE HOTEL SHAKEDOWN WERE CAPTURED. POLICE SAID THEY WERE COMMON CRIMINALS.

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6

6. THE GOVERNMENT IS CLEARLY CONCERNED OVER THE VIOLENT TREND. VICE PRESIDENT VICTOR MARTINEZ VISITED POLICE HEADQUARTERS TO CONGRATULATE POLICE ON CRACKING THE HOTEL ANDXGUNSHO**CAPER. EARLIER, MINISTER OF INTERIOR ANTONIO TROCCOLI SAID THAT BETTER EQUIPPING THE POLICE, "ESPECIALLY IN GREATER BUENOS AIRES" IS A MAJOR GOVERNMENT PRIORITY. SOMEXCONGRESSMENXAREXCALLINGXFOR** LEGISLATION WITH SEVERE PENALTIES FOR SOCCER RIOTERS.***

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7. TROCCOLI ALSO DESCRIBED SOME OF THE RECENT CRIMES AS "DISTURBING" AND "OF A POLITICAL NATURE," BUT SAID THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT OVERREACT WITH ACCUSATIONS. ROBERTO PENA, HEAD OF THE SECRETARIAT FOR STATE INTELLIGENCE, HAD NO SUCH RETICENCE. HE FLATLY STATED THAT THE "ULTRA-RIGHT" WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR SOME OF THE CRIMES, ADDING THAT "IT CAN BE PRESUMED" SOME PERPETRATORS WERE LINKED TO THE ARMED FORCES. PENA DISCOUNTED THE POSSIBILITY OF ULTRA-LEFT PARTICIPATION. A RADICAL DEPUTY COMMENTED AT A RECENT LUNCH WITH EMBOFFS THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST SHOW THAT "DEMOCRACY MEANS MORE THAN IMPORTING PORNOGRAPHIC MOVIES" AND THAT IT IS CAPABLE OF MAINTAINING PUBLIC ORDER. FAILURE TO DO SO, HE WARNED, RISKED A REPLAY OF THE ISABEL PERON ERA WHEN UNBRIDLED LAWLESSNESS AND VIOLENCE LED ARGENTINES TO WELCOME THE IMPOSITION OF MILITARY RULE.

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8. COMMENT: THE MARTINEZ POLICE STATION VISIT AND RECENT GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS MAY BE PARTIALLY INTENDED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS TAKING ACTION AGAINST THE CRIME WAVE. PROBABLY MORE IMPORTANT, HOWEVER, IS WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE VERY REAL UNDERSTANDING THAT A PUBLIC SENSE OF BREAKDOWN IN LAW AND ORDER MIGHT SIGNIFICANTLY WEAKEN THE ALFONSIN ADMINISTRATION, ESPECIALLY IF EVIDENCE SURFACES LINKING THE CRIMES TO A RENEWAL OF POLITICALLY-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE. MOST ARGENTINES ARE ALL TOO AWARE OF THE PATTERN OF POLITICAL CRIMES, PARTICULARLY KIDNAPPING AND ARMED ROBBERIES, ASSOCIATED WITH THE RISE OF THE MONTONEROS IN THE EARLY 1970'S. THE PRESENT LEVEL AND TYPE OF VIOLENCE IS OBVIOUSLY A FAR CRY FROM THOSE DAYS. NONETHELESS, THE SITUATION IS TROUBLING TO A STILL YOUNG GOVERNMENT, WHICH ALSO POTENTIALLY FACES AN ONCOMING RECESSION, AND THE TREND BEARS WATCHING. ORTIZ##

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